Torgau 2005

Russian, U.S. armies serve, train together

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Exercise Torgau 2005 May 23 to June 3 more than 400 Soldiers from the U.S. Army's 1st AD and the Russian 4th AD trained together at the Russian Combined Arms Academy and the Solnechhogorsk Training Area in the Russian Federation and at the Grafenwöhr Training Area. The Soldiers also had a chance to share in sports and cultural events.

Named after the German town on the Elbe River where Russian and American armies linked up in final days of the war in Europe during World War II, Exercise Torgau marked the first time frontline Soldiers trained together in a field setting, according to 1st AD officials.

"I think it's been a positive experience and a good chance to work with them and them to work with us," said Staff Sgt. Craig Meads, Company A, 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment, based in Baumholder. "It helps build a good relationship between the two countries and build respect. Going into this I was very positive and really looking forward to it. Not too often do you get an opportunity to do something like this. Also it was very positive for our two countries."

"This training is very important so that we will know how to

work together with our Ameri-"In between miscan friends in a sions and shooting real battle," said bullets, the Russian Russian Artillery and American Sol-Academy cadet diers talked about Sergei Chimilkin dur-American and Rusing live-fire sian life. It was training with very good for intermembers of the national relations." 4th Battalion.

27th Field Artillery Regiment in Grafenwöhr June 2. "These exerreally interesting. I don't think cises will help us with our partner- I'd ever seen a Russian colonel ships in the future.

"The American sergeants and Soldiers working with us have very high skills and standards," Chimilkin added. "Also training with the Paladin was very good."

For some U.S. Soldiers it wasn't their first experience cooperating

with Russian troops.

"I worked with Russians in 27th FA. "I know how they act and their willingness to learn. I wish that I could've gone to

"My only expectation about going to Russia was the weather I thought it would be a lot colder, but it was nice," said Staff Sgt. Harvey Cornelius of Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery. "It was a pretty good experience all around.

"The Russians stayed in the same billeting as us," said Cornelius, who explained that in the evenings and during breaks in training, U.S. and Russian Soldiers had a chance to learn more about each others countries and cultures. "We communicated mostly with body language and traded patches and things with them. A good bond was formed between the two armies."

In Grafenwöhr Cornelius and other members of the Giessen-based unit helped answer questions the Russian cadets had after working with the American howitzers.

"If I had a chance to do it again I would," Cornelius said.

"I don't think everyone was so excited coming into this, but once they met the Russians they really enjoyed it," said Capt.

Dan Cohen, a platoon leader with Battery A. 4-27th from Baumholder, explaining that the cultural e x c h a n g e was as re-

warding as the training. "I think it's been come out to my fire point. It was also interesting to trade stories. They were very interested in our experiences in Iraq. I think the cultural exchange was more important than the training itself.

"It was also important for

the Soldiers of both nations to recognize that Soldiers are Kosovo," said Sgt. Kris people the world over. They're Westergard of Battery A, 4- real people just like us," said Cohen. "Their uniforms and weapons may be different, but they're just people. They like the same rock and roll music as we do. They swapped Metallica concert stories'

> "This is the second time I've worked with a Russian crew." said Spc. Matthew Pratt of Company A, 1-35th Armor, explaining that he trained in Sardinia in 1996 with Russian Soldiers while serving as a U.S. marine. "It's always a joy to see their eyes light up when they see what we and our equipment can

> Pratt said his perceptions have changed since then. "I had a different experience back then because I thought they would be proud of their equipment and look down on our equipment. But I found they were real eager to learn. They are real fun to

"This has been an experience for me on a totally different level," said Sgt. Ronnie Groves, Company A, 1-35th Armor, adding that he is married to a Russian. "From Hollywood you get this impression that Russians are cold, but in reality the people are warm- nice.' hearted and eager to learn. That was one of the things that excited me about this. I understand a little bit of Russian 47s, BTR-80s, BMP2s and other myself."

The cultural exchanges were chance to work with. just as vital as the training, Groves said. "In between missions and shooting bullets, the 4-27th FA. "I think everyone Russian and American Soldiers talked about American and Russian life. It was very good for international relations."

"We got a lot of chances to hang out with the Russian Soldiers," said Spc. Douglas Henderson of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry, describing his experience in the Russian Federation. "We also had time to spend about an hour and tions a half in Moscow. It was a lot of

"I expected it to be a lot more Hurst, praising the interaction and

run down than it was," said chance to learn about each other's Henderson, "but it was pretty cultures. "I think it's a good opportunity for the young Soldiers who have to deal with Soldiers from other countries. They come out here and see another country — another culture. It's a chance to find some common ground."

military gear the Americans had a Hurst added that sharing jokes "It was very interesting," said with the Russian Soldiers was Spc. Harold Perez, Company A, another bonus

"They had a lot better equip-

ment than I thought they'd have,"

he said, describing the RPKs, AK-

should go through it — just for

perform well," said the

has been so far, so good," said

thony Hurst, 1-35th Armor. "They

asked some pretty smart ques-

allows us to draw closer," said

"The training aspect is what

Baumholder-based Soldier.

"If you don't practice, you don't

"Working with the Russians

"It's great how willing to learn

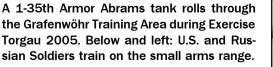
the training.

"The most important thing here is Soldiers working with Soldiers," said Capt. Chris Kuzio, commander of Company A, 1-6th Infantry, and commander of the U.S. Company Team for Exercise Torgau. "The amazing thing to see is how similar all our guys are. They all get excited about the same things and comthey are," said Sgt. 1st Class An- plain about the same things."

> "I found some real friends among the American Soldiers, added Russian cadet Semyon Kuzmin. (Sgt. Gregory F. Withrow of the 1st AD Public Affairs Office contributed to this story.)

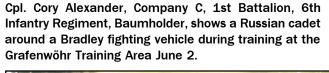


Russian Soldiers instruct 1st Armored Division tankers from Friedberg's 1st Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment, on how to operate the Russian T-72 tank at the Vystrel Training Center in the Russian Federation before letting the Americans take the tank for a test drive.











Sgt. Leslie Guy instructs Russian cadets on how to direct howitzer fire inside an M577 tracked command post at the Grafenwöhr Training Area.



Photo by Sgt. Gregory F. Withrow A Russian cadet ducks "enemy fire" during training in Grafenwöhr.